



Chapter Two

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: When reading the Bible, be careful you do not take things for granted. It is very easy to assume a phrase, or a word, means what churches have told you it means.

Always begin your reading with the presumption that there may very well be mistranslated words, misinterpreted phrases, and misunderstood idioms in the English translation you are reading. Watch for them. You probably won't catch all of them, but you will catch some of them ... and over time you'll catch more and more of them.

Make notes in your Bibles (with pencil so you can correct them later as you learn more), and watch your understanding grow.

THE official title of this book is "To The Romans." We recognize it as Paul's "letter" to the ecclesia in Rome.

New Testament letters are sometimes called "books." Sometimes they are called "epistles." "Epistle" is the Greek term for "letter." By today's standards these "epistles" are lengthy enough to be called "books."

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul greeted his brethren in Rome and told them he was commissioned by the Lord Jesus to carry The Good News to the nations ... including Rome. He claimed that he was compelled to bring this information to them. Although Rome had already heard about Jesus, Paul's letter was sent for encouragement and clarification ... to give them a more accurate understanding of the things they had already heard.

Having already heard of Christ's Reign, these ecclesians in Rome had taken the first step but still needed assistance. Hearing the gospel begins the process sometimes compared to the calling of the sheep. Calling the flock to safe pasture is the first step, but they still require tending. Flocks need to be watched over. Otherwise they begin to wander from the safe pastures, and they lose their protection from the wolves. Sheep require on-going shepherding. By the same token, Christ's flocks require on-going shepherding so that they do not unwittingly become prey for the wolves. Paul's letter to the ecclesia in Rome was to strengthen and secure the sheep that God had called out.

Paul starts this letter with a bang. In chapters one and two he begins with some tough issues, warning the Romans of common transgressions that have undermined them and their fathers in the past. He says that they must keep up their guard against these sins, and that these sins still plague them.

Not wasting time, he purges his audience at the very beginning by purposely offending the reprobates. Paul does not coddle them. He immediately puts on notice any reprobate that might be there, and in so doing he alienates them (the reprobates) and culls them out at the start.

This is not the strategy modern preachers use to get people into their church pews and membership rolls. The typical preacher uses smooth, enticing words to get as many people as possible into his church, regardless what sort of people they happen to be or what they happen to believe. In churches, quantity is more important than quality because the more people they get on their rolls the more the potential for making money (i.e., "fleecing the flock"). The method is to lure everyone in ... regardless who or what they are. Do or say anything to get them in ... then addict them to the opium of church.

Paul does just the opposite. He starts off his letter by purposely alienating the reprobates right away. He makes no bones about not wanting them in Christ's flock. When reprobates are kept in the flock they hurt the rest of the flock.

That's a good lesson for us today. Many of us need to re-examine our ideas concerning the selection of "friends" and acquaintances.

ROMANS 2:1-3 TO JUDGE, OR NOT TO JUDGE

Therefore you are without excuse, O man, everyone who is judging; for wherein you are judging another, you are judging against yourself, inasmuch as you do the very things you are judging.

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those who commit such things.

But do you suppose, O man who judges those doing such things, that you will escape the judgment of God while you do the same?

CHURCHES commonly teach that Christians aren't supposed to judge. This passage is often quoted by them, erroneously, to support their claim.

But notice that Paul did not condemn the Romans for judging. Rather, he accused them of being hypocrites. He said they were guilty of the same things for which they were judging others. That is hypocrisy. He told them that in judging others they were also judging themselves. Paul didn't tell them to stop judging. He only said that judges should not judge hypocritically.

JUDGMENT IS A GOOD THING.

As Christians we are supposed to judge right from wrong, and good from evil. Unless we do this, we can't follow God's Law. Unless we judge we can't even identify God's law. No one is exempt from the requirement of judging, or from being judged.

Paul taught against hypocrisy in judging. He did not teach against the act of judging itself.

Indeed, God demands that we judge:

17. Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Is:1:17

3. Do you not know that we shall judge messengers? More so matters of life?

4. Indeed, therefore, if you have criteria in the matters of life, you seat the un-esteemed as judges.

5. I speak to your shame. Is there no one wise among you who can judge between his brethren?

1 Cor. 6:3-5

24. Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Jn.7:24

QUESTION: We live in a world with many different ethnic groups. Wars are started because one group judges another group. Everybody can't do things the same way all the time. How can we have peace if people are always judging one another? Wouldn't it be better if all the judging was left up to God?

ROMANS 2:4-5 DEALING YOURSELF OUT OF GOD'S PLAN

Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are treasuring up to yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revealing of God's righteous judgment,

HERE Paul asks a rhetorical question. He tells these very people that they have received grace, longsuffering and goodness from God, and yet some of them are unwilling to extend to others the same grace they themselves received. That makes them hypocrites. These people were Israelites. They had received the goodness of God (the New Covenant). They had been granted grace... and then they took it in vain. This obdurate attitude and hypocrisy is addressed also in the book of Hebrews:

26 For if we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the contrary ones.

Hebrews 10:26,27

These were wolves among the flock. They received God's grace, but did not appreciate it. God's grace was not enough for them. Thus, there was nothing left for them but a fearful anticipation of judgment and indignation ... unless and until they repented.

28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29. *Of how much worse punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has despised the Spirit of grace?*

Hebrews 10:28, 29

These people had received God's grace and forgiveness through the blood of the New Covenant. Some of these same people were now claiming credit themselves for those gifts from God, and were trying to deny those gifts to others who needed them the same as they had needed them. These were hypocrites, and by their attitude they were bringing shame upon the covenant.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. In chapters one and two, Paul indicated this was happening to certain Romans at that time. They were in the process of falling into the hands of the living God.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE JUDGMENT OF GOD WAS ACTIVE AT THAT VERY TIME.

"The day of wrath" means "the judgment of God." God's judgment/wrath was present and active as Paul was writing this letter. Judgment is not withheld until the so-called "end of time" ... as taught in churches. God judges man in every age. And we've seen it many times in history - the judgment that fell in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is one example of "the day of wrath" or "Judgment Day." God judges men according to their deeds, and that judgment is active throughout the ages!

Thus, when we see evil around us, and rising above us, we should not suppose that the evil is caused by the lack of God's judgment. We should not assume that God is waiting till "the end" to judge everyone ... as churchgoers are so fond of saying. Rather, we should realize that when evil rises above us it is a punishment upon us for ignoring God's laws. In other words, when evil prospers among us it is NOT due to the lack of God's judgment... but rather evidence of judgment for our disobedience. Evil is not the result of a passive God. It is the natural result our own disobedience. It is God's active judgment (blessing or curse) upon us ... as described in Deuteronomy chapter 28:

1. And it shall come to pass, if you will hearken diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that Yahweh your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth:

2. And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you will hearken unto the voice of Yahweh your God.

15. But it shall come to pass, if you will not hearken to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you:

45. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you, and shall pursue you, and overtake you, till you are destroyed; because you did not heed the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded you:

46. And they shall be upon you for a sign and for a wonder, and upon your seed for ever.

47. Because you did not serve Yahweh your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

48. Therefore you will serve your enemies which Yahweh shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until he has destroyed you.

Dt. 28:1-2, 15, 45-48

PONDER THIS: In the not-too-distant past people seemed to better understand judgment as God's blessing or cursing (reward or punishment). Today in the 21st century people have fallen into a state of apathetic denial. The popular lie is that all bad things come from a supernatural Devil who rules the Earth, and that Jesus is helpless against this Devil until a future "millennium" age.

People would rather not admit that they are at fault or that judgment is upon them. Instead they blame their hard times on luck, or on a so-called "Satan." They sing "God Bless America" ... and they salute the flag while their churches tell them to trust the government and fear "Communists," or "Islamic Terrorists."

ROMANS 2:6-9 LIFE OF THE AGE

Who will render to each according to his deeds;

Eonian life to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption;

But indignation and wrath to those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth but yield to unrighteousness:

Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man who is doing evil, upon the Judean first and also upon the Greek;

EONIAN LIFE is the spirit we receive through the New Covenant. The term is wrongly translated in the King James Version as “eternal life.”

Eonian life means “life of the age.” In other words, the life Jesus gives us in the New Covenant Age. We are living in the New Covenant Age. Jesus gives new life (new birth) to his remnant flock.

“An eon” (as in “eonian”), by definition, has a beginning and an end. An eon is not unending ... as insinuated by the KJV translators. An eon is an age. Therefore, “eonian” cannot mean “never-ending.” Such mistranslations were added by the translators and the churches to fit their preconceived doctrines.

“Eonian life” is the life connected with the New Covenant Eon. It was not biological life, but rather spiritual life. It was “kingdom life.” It was “life in Christ.” The literal translation is “life of this age,” or “age-life.” The eon (age) was that of Christ’s Reign. Christ was giving new life to Israel, and judging them.

Paul says Jesus’ Reign bestowed eonian life that was evident in those who are obedient. At the same time, the lack of eonian life became evidence of those who disobeyed the truth and received wrath as their judgment. Spiritual life meant obedience; spiritual death meant rebellion.

It was “The Eon”: the New Covenant Age. It was happening right then, at that time. The judgment was creating a polarization; a separation. There was no thought of postponing judgment until a so-called “End-Time Judgment” ... as the heathen taught (and churches continue to teach).

“Eonian life,” “Age-life,” or “Life of The Age” are Biblical terms with which you should become familiar. It was “the life” produced by “the age.” If these terms seem strange or sound awkward it is because heathen churches and false prophets have, for several hundred years, replaced the right words with wrong words... and you’ve only heard the wrong words. But once you understand the Biblical concept, a new level of understanding opens to you, and the simple truths begin to make sense.

QUESTION: By redefining “eternal life” aren’t you trivializing the reward that we are striving for in the next life? If not, how then will we be rewarded and judged when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom?

QUESTION: Are there any rewards that come with this so-called contemporary “eonian life” you talk about? And do you get those rewards when you are baptized or become a member of a church?

ROMANS 2:10.16 **AWARENESS OF LAW**

But glory, honor and peace to everyone working that which is good, to the Judean first and to the Greek.

For there is no taking of face with God.

Whoever sins without law will perish without law, and whoever sins in the law will be judged through law.

For not the hearers of law are just before God, but the doers of law will be justified.

For when nations which have not law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law are law to themselves,

These are manifesting the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences together, and between one another, bearing witness of their reasonings and accusations.

In which day God is judging the hidden things of men by Jesus Christ through my good news.

VERSE 11 is interesting. It says that with God there is “no taking of face.” God takes no one at face value. He looks under the surface. Anyone hoping to get a pass from God because of his race, his political party, or because of the bumper stickers on his car ... is in for disappointment. It takes more than facade to be justified in God’s eyes. God looks upon the heart, not upon outward labels, to see who you really are.

That's not to say He doesn't notice outward differences in people. There are important outward differences in people: differences to which we are born, as well as differences acquired after birth. There are differences in race, gender, philosophy, religion, etc. Those differences can sometimes reflect what is inside. However, the outward facade ("face value") is not enough. God sees under the surface (the "outward man") and looks upon the inward man ... because facade can be deceiving.

Verse 12 has been confused as well due to church teachings which say that law has been abolished. To understand this verse we must read it without prejudice, and in context with the rest of the Bible. The text begins, "Whoever sins without law..." Can this possibly suggest that man can sin where no law exists? If so, this would contradict the Bible's own definition of "sin": "sin is transgression of the law."

4. Everyone who sins transgresses the law: for sin is transgression of the law.

1 John 3:4

For sin to exist, law must exist. The Bible tells us that sin does exist, thus we must conclude that law exists as well. It is ludicrous to speak of sin in the world unless there is also law.

Without law there can be no sin. God's law is in all creation. It has always been so, and it will always be so. God's laws govern all. So, when Paul qualifies this statement by saying "WITHOUT LAW," he obviously is not inferring that there can be regions or times with no law. Rather, he is referring to people and societies that reject God's law or are ignorant of it.

"Whoever sins without law will perish without law."

Everyone is subject to God's law, whether or not he understands it or possesses the writings of the law and the prophets. Ignorance of law does not exempt one from the effects of law. Lawbreaking brings problems (judgment) whether we are educated

in law or ignorant of it. Law governs everyone with or without our awareness of it.

For instance, ignorance of the law against usury does not excuse the usurer. He is still a thief ... and thievery has certain natural consequences and judgments. Usury hurts society ... whether or not the people understand the law.

Dishonesty and adultery both hurt society whether or not the people understand why.

The law of gravity can kill you if you break it ... whether or not you know and understand the law.

Law exists! All men are subject to law ... whether or not they are educated and aware of law. Law governs birth, life, and death. No man can break God's law with impunity.

When Paul says "*without law*" he does not imply the absence of law. Rather, he implies ignorance of law.

Those who break the law in ignorance will perish in ignorance. Law will govern them with or without their awareness or consent.

On the other side of the coin, "... *whoever sins in the law will be judged through law*." This indicates that there is a second aspect to law-breaking: namely, the moral aspect. Moral judgment falls upon those who sin presumptuously (i.e., knowingly). In other words, those who knowingly break the law receive a greater judgment than those who do it ignorantly. Those who break the law ignorantly suffer the natural results of breaking the law. But, in addition to suffering the natural results of lawbreaking, those who sin knowingly also suffer moral judgment (i.e., judgment of the conscience).

Where Paul says "*in the law*," he means "*with understanding of law*" (i.e., having a conscience enlightened by law). If we understand the law but choose to knowingly break it we are judged as willful sinners. The ignorant heathen, on the other hand, are judged less severely than those who sin knowingly and presumptuously.

Those who ignorantly worship false gods perish as ignorant heathen.

However, those who know the truth but choose to worship false gods in defiance of those truths will be judged not only as sinners, but as reprobates.

Paul was speaking of hypocrites who had the law, but they chose to ignore it. Paul further explains that many of the Israelites scattered in the nations lived in societies without God's written word to teach them. But he says that these men could learn of God through simple observation of his creation. When these people came to know God in this way, without the written law to guide them, they were more justified than the others (i.e., those who had the written law but ignored it). Men are justified by their conscience and sincerity, not by what they know (Jms. 2:19), nor by the number of books (scrolls) in their libraries.

The people in the nations, to whom Paul referred, were the scattered remnant who had the law written in their hearts. We know from Jeremiah and Hebrews they were Israelites to whom God promised to write his law in their hearts:

31. "Behold, the days come," says Yahweh, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

32. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them," says Yahweh.

33. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, "says Yahweh, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31 :31-33

6. But now He has affected a manifold ministry, in as much as He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which has been established upon better promises.

7. For if the first had been faultless,

no place would have been sought for a second.

8. For in finding fault with them He says: "Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in My covenant; and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10. For this is the covenant I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds and write them upon their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.

13. In that He says "new," He has made the former one obsolete; and growing old it vanishes away.

Hebrews 8:6-13

Through Jeremiah God promised Israel that He would establish a new covenant with Israel. This new covenant would, among other things, internalize his law in their minds and hearts. The promise was repeated in the book of Hebrews as an explanation of the fulfillment of that covenant. Thus, when Paul spoke to the Romans about those who had "the law in their hearts" he was speaking of Israelites who had been "raised/awakened" and given a new conscience. "Conscience" is mentioned in Romans 2 verse 15:

"... which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness..."

The new "life" produced by the New Covenant included a new conscience to know right from wrong. A man with a conscience, even without the benefit of the written word, can detect and believe in God (Rom. 1:20). On the other hand, a man without a godly conscience – even if he has the written word – cannot. He is lost. Having the law (God's word) in his physi-

cal possession is not enough. He must internalize it and believe it. A man without a godly conscience (holy spirit) cannot find truth regardless of the amount of information to which he has access.

In verse 16 Paul mentions the judgment of God. He does not speak in the future tense ("shall judge"), but rather in the present active tense ("is judging"). In Paul's day, God was "... *judging the hidden things of men by Jesus Christ.*" THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ALSO BROUGHT JUDGMENT. Most people haven't thought of it that way, but the gospel of Christ brought discrimination and separation. It distinguished between good and evil and began the process of judging and refining. The wheat was separated from the tares. The wheat was saved and the tares were burned. The sheep were separated from the goats; the just from the unjust; the forgiven were separated from the reprobates. That was (and is) judgment. The saved were fit to work and have a position in Christ's Kingdom, and the un-saved were not. They were culled out.

32. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:

33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the system:

Mtt. 25:32-34

As the recruits (disciples) went about spreading the good news of Christ's Reign, God's judgment followed. The process of refinement means discrimination. Growth, education, and development of any kind creates natural discrimination and judgment. When Jesus caused certain men to grow, learn, change, and separate themselves from sin, it caused separation and judgment. It cannot be avoided. Growth and development are naturally juxtaposed over against stagnation and backwardness. The difference becomes apparent, and causes judgment and then separation. The separation is, in itself, judgment. People begin to notice the difference. Spiritual growth changes men. It gives them new insight. New insights bring examination and judgment to all things.

That's the way the Gospel of the Kingdom works upon man: with the renewal and development comes insight, responsibility, and judgment. We are all being judged daily on this basis. God's judgment does not rest.

QUESTION: You say the "Israelites" were in the nations and had God's Law written in their hearts. But it doesn't seem as if they all, "from the least to the greatest," knew God. In fact, there seems to still be a lot of Israelites around who do not know God.

Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 sound more like the ideal world when Jesus returns to set up his millennial kingdom... rather than something that was started in Paul's day. How do you explain that?

ROMANS 2:17-23 FALSE CLAIMS

But if you are known as a Judaist, and you are resting upon law, and you are boasting in God,

And if you know His will, and you approve the manifold things instructed out of the law,

And if you are persuaded that you are a guide to the blind, a light to the ones in darkness,

An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

You who claim to teach others, do you not teach yourselves? You who proclaim “do not steal,” are you stealing?

You who say “do not commit adultery,” are you committing adultery? You who claim to abhor the idols, are you robbing temples?

You who glory in the law, through the transgression of the law are you dishonoring God?

PAUL asks some pointed questions. If these Romans held to Judaism, and had the law, and claimed to be teachers of those in darkness – why did they not understand the law themselves? Why did they not teach themselves?

In saying this, Paul admitted the Judaists (Judeans) had copies of the law. But having law means little if you don't understand it and believe it. Paul said their exclusive claim to the law was empty when they hadn't even learned the law themselves.

Clearly, the Judeans had laws and traditions, but they were NOT the laws and traditions of God.

Be careful not to fall for the lie promoted by churches ... that Jesus abolished law. Jesus, as well as Paul, taught law. In fact Paul himself, in these very declarations, was JUDGING people and identifying sin. Sin cannot be identified without law. Thus, Paul verifies the existence of law.

Paul said that judges judge themselves with the same law they judge others. Judges are subject to judgment too.

Paul accused the religious establishment of taking for granted that they acquired righteousness through pos-

session of the law. He says having and knowing is not enough.

The Judaists of Paul's day were like churchgoers today. They had God's written word. They claimed it made them special. But they didn't believe it, and they didn't trust it. Instead, they trusted Babylonian tradition (“the tradition of the elders”).

Likewise, churchgoers today trust church tradition instead of God's word. In both cases, merely having the written word in possession is not enough. It must be trusted and used. By the same token, claiming membership in a group, or in a race of people, justifies no one. Sincerity comes from the heart, not from ostensible associations and memberships.

PONDER THIS: Paul's criticism in this section is not aimed at Judaism only. He shows that ostensible membership in any group or race is not enough. Justification requires sincerity and commitment. The real nature of the man is defined, not by ostensible membership in a group, but by his inward motivation. Outward appearance is not enough. A man is judged by what's on the inside, not on “face value.”

ROMANS 2:24-29 RIGHTEOUSNESS - NOT RITUAL

For through you the name of God is being blasphemed in the nations, as it has been written.

For in fact, circumcision benefits only if you are keeping the law; but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

If, therefore, the uncircumcised observes the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision?

And the one who is naturally uncircumcised, if he is fulfilling the law, will he not judge you, who through the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law?

For not the one manifest outwardly is a Judean. And not that which is displayed outwardly in the flesh is circumcision.

But a Judean is one inwardly. And circumcision is of the heart and in spirit, not of the letter, of whose praise is not from men, but from God.

THE nations looked upon Judea and saw a people who claimed to be godly, and to have the law of God: his written Word. They saw also judgment from God upon the Judeans, and the Judeans were bringing shame upon the name of God. This hurt the cause of Christ, and it hurt all believers who were trying to sort truth from false doctrine.

To bring it forward to our time, people look at churches today much the same way the world looked at the Judeans back then. People look at the churches today and say, "If this is Christianity, what good has it done? If these are Jesus' people, then we don't want Jesus." Thus, the churches today are shaming Christ and doing greater damage to our cause than all the other enemies combined.

By claiming to be the people of God in Paul's day, the Judeans brought shame upon God's Name. By the same token, America has been considered a Christian nation. And, as it happened with the Judeans, other nations today look at America and say "If that's God's way, I don't want it!"

America's witness tells the world that the Bible doesn't work, because that which calls itself Christianity has failed in America. What's more, America is the most hated and hypocritical nation on Earth.

That's what Paul meant when he said that the Judeans were causing the name of God to be blasphemed among the nations.

6. ...you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Mtt. 15:6

The Judeans relied upon religious status (the tradition of the elders) as righteousness. To them, the circumcision had become a sign that conferred instant and automatic righteousness. It declared membership in the Judean culture or the Judean religion. Circumcision had become the mark a Judean, Judaist, Judaizer or Jew.

Try temporarily replacing the term "circumcision" with "membership."

When Paul uses the term "circumcision" in these verses he means being a Judean. You could also substitute the terms "Pharisee" or "Sadducee." They possessed the scrolls with the written words of Moses and the prophets. Paul said it was profitable to have the law if they kept it, but, if they did not keep the law then "circumcision" (membership) meant nothing - it was made "un-circumcision" (un-membership).

This teaching is instructive to anyone claiming righteousness by association. There are those who simplistically think that just being a racial "Israelite" makes them righteous. However, Paul clearly states that membership in a race, a religion, or a group can be only surface. To be a child of God requires more than merely being born into a race, or claiming membership in a group.

Verse 26 says that if a stranger keeps the righteousness of the law, he is counted as a family member. Clearly righteousness goes beyond mere membership in a group, culture, or race of people. Whether Judean, Israelite, Roman, or citizen of Christ's Kingdom, it is what's in the heart that counts. God is not impressed with ostentatious show, but rather inward sincerity.

Paul admitted that Judeans had an advantage, but not what they assumed it to be. The advantage was not in being a Judean. Their advantage was that they had access to scripture, and to sacred recorded history.

What is an outward Judean? Well, that's someone whose claim is based on outward appearances only: a way of dressing, a ritual, racial orientation, or something ostensible. In

other words, things that are taken at face value. Paul says that a real Judean was not made by "circumcision" (being placed in membership) that appears outwardly in the flesh. Rather, it was by "inward circumcision" or "circumcision of the heart."

Of course this is true with any group or membership regardless. Christians, for instance, must have more than mere labels or mere memberships in groups. They must have "inward" commitment to the principles of God. The claim to righteousness by mere membership is hypocritical because it is based upon outward things of face value. Being Judeans ostensibly did not make them true Judeans any more than being ostensible Christians can make us real Christians. Nor can being an ostensible Israelite make you a genuine child of Abraham.

8. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin saying within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say to you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

Luke 3:8

Surface labels are insufficient. A man is truly known by inward evidence of the heart. Paul is describing a condition of conscience that makes new what they truly are: a Judean, an Israelite, or a Christian ... regardless of birth or association.

Paul was opening up an issue that we must take seriously. We can't pass this up if we are to understand the rest of Paul's teachings. This is an essential teaching. He is talking about people who thought their status with God depended upon their surface appearance, who they were, who their parents were, who they named as their god, or the temple they joined.

Paul tells them NO!

God judges people by what is in their hearts - not by face value.

END OF ROMANS
CHAPTER TWO

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POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Paul was commissioned to carry the gospel to Israel in the nations. This letter was to Israelites in Rome.
2. The ecclesia in Rome had already heard about Jesus, but Paul sent his letter to strengthen them and to address some problems among them.
3. Paul's method of teaching began with alienating the reprobates as soon as possible. Like refining gold, the sooner the rubble and dross is expelled the better.
This method is good to keep in mind when we are choosing friends and acquaintances.
4. Paul does not condemn judging. Rather, he condemns the judges who were sinning the same sins for which they were condemning others.
5. Paul also said it is hypocritical to receive God's un-merited grace and then pretend that you earned it. It is also hypocritical to try to prevent others from receiving grace because you think they are not worthy.
6. The judgment of God is present and active in all ages. Judgment does not accumulate or get saved up until one great judgment at a so-called end-time event.
7. "Eonian life" means "age-life," or "life associated with the eon (the age)." Eonian life in the New Testament is the new birth life given through Jesus and the New Covenant.
8. Jesus did not abolish God's law. Everyone everywhere is subject to law.

At the time of Moses, the Old Covenant and its statutes were added (Gal. 3:19) to the existing body of God's laws. About 600 years later Israel abandoned that covenant when she rejected Yahweh (I Sam:8). The loss of the Old Covenant affected no laws except those that had come with the added covenant.

God's laws of conduct, the knowledge of right and wrong, do not become obsolete. Paul did not teach that the law was abolished. He did teach that the Old Covenant, along with the statutes that pertained to it, were abolished when Israel rejected Yahweh and broke the covenant ... resulting in Yahweh divorcing Israel (Jer. 3:6-8).

9. God promised to place his law in the hearts of Israelites. When Paul speaks of "the law in the hearts," he is speaking of Israelites. Having "the law in your heart" means to love the law.

10. There are two levels of law-breaking: 1. Sins committed in ignorance, and 2. Sins committed defiantly and presumptuously (I Jn. 5:16-17; Nu. 15:25-30). The presumptuous sinner receives greater judgment.

11. Judgment naturally follows enlightenment. Those who have been given truth fall under greater judgment. *"To whom much is given, of him much shall be required."* (Lk. 12:48)

ANSWERS:

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In matters of conscience, judgment belongs to God. But every man is required to judge between good and evil, based upon his grasp of God's law. He must judge first concerning himself, and then concerning others. To take away man's obligation to judge is to take away his distinction of right and wrong. Without judging there can be no distinction between good and evil. We must judge evil in order to identify it and abstain from it.

To cop out by "leaving all judgment to God" is to divorce yourself from your God-ordained role in life.

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a) I do not redefine "eternal life." Rather, the churches have redefined it. Look it up in an etymological dictionary. "Eternal" does not mean "endless." It actually means "having an end." Churches not only mistranslated "eonian" from the Greek they also re-defined the English "eternal."

It is folly to think Jesus must "return" in order to judge or reward us. He is NOT going to "return" ... because He is NOT gone. Furthermore, He reigns and judges today and has during the past 2000 years.

b) Yes, there are many blessings that come with eonian life. The first is the gift of faith (trust) in God. The second reward is the ability to discern truth (i.e., "eyes and ears"). The third reward is a sense of belonging and security in Christ. And there are many more rewards that follow.

We begin receiving these rewards when we receive "sonship" and become citizens of Christ's Kingdom. Sometimes that happens about the time of our baptism. Sometimes it happens at another time. It happens when you accept Jesus' gift of eonian life and citizenship under his Reign.

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Israelites in the nations were given a chance to know God. They were introduced through the spreading of the Good News of Christ's Reign. Some accepted the good news and internalized it, and others took it in vain, choosing not to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts. These were cast out of the Kingdom, into darkness. Thus, the judgment and separation was actively occurring within Israel.

This separation (judgment) has been ever since Christ ascended his throne. The churches' teaching that judgment is on hold, awaiting a so-called "return" is pagan nonsense.